Sitar goes cyber

Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan releases a CD-ROM for sitar stude

RENUKA SURYANARAYAN

"IT is great to be born in this country and I'm giving back what I learnt, to India," says the 73-year-old eminent sitarist Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan. Passing on the treasures learnt from his father Beenkar Ustad Jaffer Khan, of the Indore gharana, he is now becoming a cyber guru of the sitar.

He has brought out a CD-ROM package, *Jafferkhani*, featuring his words, music and images demonstrating each technique in a computerised video format. The book itself has detailed instructions about finer aspects of Khan's playing. And thanks to the video, a student can watch the teacher's hands demonstrate the exact angle and plucking motion. Several concert pieces are also presented in video. Even for those with no intention of playing the sitar, it is useful for appreciating the instrument.

Khan*saheb* has played for a number of films like *Mughal-e-Azam* and *Chori Chori*. Composers of the calibre of Naushad, C Ramachandra, Madan Mohan, O P Nayyar, Rajesh Roshan, Shankar Jaikishen, Vasant Desai, Anil Biswas and Sudhir Phadke have drawn heavily from his mastery over the sitar. He even played the enchanting piece in the Raga Hamir, which forms the base of the song *Madhuban Mein Radhika*, in the film *Kohinoor*. About his recent CD-ROM, he agrees that while it could guide one towards appreciating the nuances of the sitar, it could never equal the experience of learning the art from a teacher. "You can see a rose flower in a book. But unless you go into the garden and see it, the experience is not complete," he explains.

He has been teaching at his Halim Academy of Sitar for 25 years and even won the Padmashri in 1970. "At that time, it had value. But now, people whom I have guided have got the Padma Vibhushan," says the veteran sitarist, adding that such things add to the already existing confusion caused by aspects such as the *gharana* system. "*Gharana ne satyanash kiya* (*Gharanas* have destroyed everything)," he

rues. His son, Zunain, has als
ously taken up the sitar. But h
that the young generation wil
to rely on more practice, rath
looking for short-cuts.